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PROBLEMS OF LAND AND PEOPLE IN THE SOUTHEAST

- I. In the Southeast we have the problem of an excessive pressure of population on the land. This pressure is increasing.

The Facts:

Population pressure in the Southeast is largely pressure on farm land rather than pressure upon urban employments. For the nation as a whole, only 47 percent of the population is rural, while 70 percent of the population of the Southeast is rural, only 30 percent urban, 15.4 percent (over half) of the urban population non-metropolitan. The Southeast is the most thickly populated rural area in the country.

Following the final invasion of the region by the boll weevil in 1921 — climaxing a cumulation of mal-adjustments — there was actually less land in farms in the Southeast in 1930 than in 1860. Yet between 1860 and 1930 the total number of farm families in the region had almost doubled. (1,214,168 to 2,284,352).

That has meant, of course, an increase in the number of small farms.

In 1880	56 percent of farms in region were less than 100 acres
	36 percent of farms in region were less than 50 acres
	13 percent of farms in region were less than 20 acres
In 1935	77 percent of farms in region were less than 100 acres
	54 percent of farms in region were less than 50 acres
	24 percent of farms in region were less than 20 acres

Nor is this the result of available farm lands lying fallow. In Alabama and Georgia for example, there are only 25,000 new, family size farms available, while there are 56,500 farm families on land too poor (largely because of erosion) to produce an adequate income, and 47,500 families on farms too small to provide an adequate living — the net deficit of land is tremendous.

With death rates somewhat above national average, the Southeast still shows a rate of excess of births over deaths of more than 10 per 1,000 as compared with a national average of 7 per 1,000.

In the next twenty years the natural increase of population may be expected to total over 7,000,000.

Base figures on population, 1930:	Total	25,550,898
	Rural	18,000,000
	Wh.	12,500,000
	Ne.	5,500,000
	Urban	7,000,000

Rural farm 47.7 percent; Rural non-farm 22.5 percent; urban 29.8 percent.

Negro population of U. S. 11,891,143; 26.1 percent outside South.

- II. Extent to which increase in population exceeds the number needed to replenish present population.

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Facts:

The rate of natural increase, considering rate of increase which would suffice to maintain static population figure as 100, ranges from 134 to 157, for the region is well over 140.

Net increase in population is about 180,000 a year white and 75,000 a year Negro.

Rate of increase in every state in the Southeast except Florida greater than average rate of increase for nation.

(Rate of natural increase of Negroes only 2/3 that of whites in rural districts, due to high death rate.)

- III. Meanwhile, with pressure of population increasing, the amount and fertility of land available is decreasing due to erosion.

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The Facts:

61 percent of the nation's eroded land is in the South, 97,000,000 acres have been seriously damaged and 30 million acres (an area about the size of the state of North Carolina) completely ruined by erosion.

The lands of the Southeast send annually 20 million tons of potash, nitrogen, and phosphorus down the rivers to the sea.

The South uses about $5\frac{1}{2}$ million tons of commercial fertilizer annually (\$161,000,000 worth) as contrasted to $2\frac{1}{2}$ million tons for the rest of the nation.

The Southeast spends more than 7 percent of its gross agricultural income on fertilizer. With only 20 percent of the nation's agricultural income, it pays 60 percent of the nation's fertilizer bill; the Far West, Northwest, and Southwest combined, with 40 percent of the nation's agricultural income pay only 5 percent of the nation's fertilizer bill.

This has a direct effect on income of working farmers in the region. Costs of farm operation in several contrasting regions vary thus.

Southeast:	41 percent for fertilizer, 27 percent for feed, 32 percent for <u>labor</u> .
Southwest:	4 percent for fertilizer, 36 percent for feed, 60 percent for <u>labor</u> .
Middle States:	6 percent for fertilizer, 51 percent for feed, 42 percent for <u>labor</u> .

It is to be noted that the above is a summary of the results of the investigation and is not intended to be a final report.

CONCLUSIONS

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IV. With this increasing pressure of population on the land and decreasing size of farms there has gone little increase in efficiency in using the land. The region still is largely dependent on cotton and tobacco.

Of 2,380,000 farms in the Southeast, about 1,100,000 are cotton farms and 450,000 tobacco farms. Percent of total harvested acreage planted in cotton of one state (Mississippi) is over 60 percent, for three states (Miss., Ala., Arkansas) is over 50 percent; for two other states is almost 50 percent (South Carolina and Louisiana).

The Southeast does not grow enough food and feed crops.

The Facts:

The Southeast is a region of farms, but an importer of foods due to concentration on the one cash crop, cotton. As compared with national per capita consumption, the region has a shortage of 121 million gallons of milk ($18\frac{1}{2}$ million cattle) and 70 million dozen eggs annually.

Death rates from Pellagra, due to a lack of vegetables in the diet, is 9 times as high there as elsewhere.

Due to malnutrition and concomitant ills of poverty, relief organizations found more than a quarter of their expenditures in several sections going for medical care.

Almost half of the tenant family's budget goes for food. From 40 to 58 percent of the food of tenant families is purchased.

Only 15 percent of the total gross income for landlords and tenants combined was for home use.

From 50 to 90 percent of southern children in large areas receive inadequate diets for any normal health standard.

V. Lacking a self-sustaining subsistence economy on the farm, the region has become excessively dependent on an erratic international market. These markets have been greatly reduced by the European War.

This dependence on an erratic market -- forcing maintenance of cash or credit resources against both climatic and economic hazards -- has been an added discouragement to ownership. Tenancy in the cotton regions is very high.

The Facts:

During the 40-year period from 1894 to 1934 the average value of a bale of cotton has \$59, but the range has been from \$25 to \$178. And tobacco prices have been known to drop more than 50 percent in a single year since the war.

It is also interesting to note that the population of the island in 1950 was 1,100,000 and that the population in 1955 was 1,200,000. This shows a steady increase in the population of the island.

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Tenants number about 65 percent of all farmers in the cotton regions, and over 47 percent of all farmers in the tobacco regions.

Of three million tenant farms in the country, over a million are in the cotton belt. 41.4 percent of all tenant farmers are in the cotton regions.

- VI. With cash-crop economy and tenancy have come additional evils in heavy debts and a high cost of credit.
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The Facts:

Over 30 percent of all farms in the area are mortgaged for an average of over 20 percent of the worth of all farms. Most tenants depend on credit to carry them over from harvest to harvest.

In 1934 a survey in six Southern States revealed tenants and croppers paying an average of 37 percent per annum on credit extended them for furnish — food and feed. And the same survey found landlords paying an average of 10 percent to 14 percent for their money.

Except for an unusually prosperous year, the majority of the farming population of the Southeast operates on borrowed money for a number of months.

- VII. With the people of the Southeast still under sway of the cotton tradition, their place in cotton culture is very seriously threatened due to emergency of new competitive areas.
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The Facts:

Between 1909 and 1912, 54.2 percent of this country's cotton crop was produced east of the Mississippi; between 1927 and 1930, only 43 percent.

Total net cost of producing a pound of lint in the Piedmont Southeast is half again as great as cost in Western Texas. (12.2c - 8.5c).
Cash outlay in the Piedmont is twice as great. (5.9c - 2.9c).

And a shift from the one region to the other means fewer people employed, not merely migration, for it takes less than half the man hours to produce a bale in west Texas. (Ratio 48.4 - 100.4)

Moreover mechanization is proceeding in the West, where larger farms are the rule and mechanization is more practicable. Dr. Paul Taylor, of California, reports that among migrants to that state (for the last few years chiefly fleeing from drouth and crop failure) are an increasing number whose jobs have been taken by tractors.

If the cotton picker should be perfected, not only would the pickers be displaced, but others would be ousted by tractors and four-row cultivators which would become more widely used once the chief bulwark of hand-labor demand was gone.

(Mechanization has proceeded much more slowly in cotton than in other major crops. Machines have reduced man-hours per unit of production since 1880 in wheat 62 percent, in corn 42 percent, in cotton 23 percent.)

On the small farms of the Southeast only a little machinery to supplement a man's hands can be had. The average value of farm implements and machinery per farm is less than \$200 in all but one of the Southeastern cotton states, while only one state outside that region falls below an average of \$360 and the preponderance have more than \$750 worth of machinery on each farm.

- VIII. These problems are certainly serious enough to challenge any population, however, highly trained. But in educational as well as economic opportunity the Southeast lags behind the nation as a whole.
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The Facts:

In percentage of illiteracy, the southeastern states keep company at the bottom of the heap only with Arizona and New Mexico. The other 35 states all rank higher. The region affords no university of the first rank.

And even in the matter of practical education, it is obvious that a section so long trained in a one-crop system must have few farmers who know how to follow a more enlightened system of farm management.

- IX. Nor is this to blame the region. It simply has not the taxable wealth to support a school system equal to that of the rest of the nation.
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The Facts:

The richest state in the Southeast ranks lower in wealth per capita than the poorest state outside the Southeast.

The Southeast's farm population with one-fiftieth of the nation's income has one-eighth of the nation's children.

Total tax revenues in 6 southern states amounted to \$50 or less per child while in seven industrial states, tax revenues amounted to \$200 per child.

In several Southeastern states less than 50 percent of the population is in the productive age group 20-55, while over 45 percent of the population was less than 20 years of age.

It has been found that the most effective way of dealing with the problem of the distribution of the population is to take into account the following factors:

(1) The distribution of the population is a function of the geographical situation, the economic situation, and the social situation.

On the other hand, the distribution of the population is also a function of the political situation, the economic situation, and the social situation.

III. The distribution of the population is a function of the geographical situation, the economic situation, and the social situation.

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Because of a very high ratio of children, the productive adults of the Southeast carry a burden of child care 80 percent greater than the far west, 44 percent greater than the northeast, and 43 percent greater than the middle west.

The South has exported about $3\frac{1}{2}$ million people since the turn of the century; estimating educational costs at \$2,500 per person, this represents an educational subsidy from the South to other sections of the country of \$8,750 million.

It would take 99.3 percent of Mississippi's tax income to put its educational expenditure on a par with the national average.

Of the eleven Southeastern states, Florida alone spends a proportion of its total tax resources for education less than the national average.

- X. Non-agricultural outlets for this population dammed up on the farm with inadequate opportunity have been lost during the depression. Outlet to outside industry has been shut off. Percent of farm people who leave the Southeast for the north and for cities.

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The Facts:

Over the last thirty years an average 100,000 people a year left the Southeast for other regions, chiefly industrial. But since 1930 these industrial outlets for population have been shut off and an estimated million and a quarter people have returned to the Southeast from other areas where they have become unemployed. So between $1\frac{1}{2}$ and $2\frac{1}{2}$ million people who would ordinarily migrate have been added to the press of population and seem to have little avenue of escape.

As an indication of the lack of opportunity in normal pursuits in the region, it may be noted that as many young men entered the navy at the Macon and Raleigh recruiting stations last year as entered from Chicago and New York.

Of 24,100,000 natives born citizens of the United States born in rural areas of the Southeast, 28 percent live outside the area in which they were born, 16 percent in other regions (14 percent of the whites and 21 percent of the Negroes) and 12 percent in Southern cities (about the same percent of white and Negro populations.)

These rural districts, in other words, have continued their own population growth, added to population of Southern cities, and sent about 3,500,000 people to other regions. The cost of educating this group of people which the south has exported is equal to a third of the present national debt.

XI. Miscellaneous figures on migration;

The Facts;

Migration out of south (net) 1865 to 1900, 5,000,000 people
 " " " " " 1930 " 1930 3,500,000 people

Immigrants from South constitute 4 percent of population of other regions.

Between 1910 and 1930, acreage of farm land in the South Atlantic states decreased from 104 million to 86 million acres. Same period, Negro farm population decreased, white farm population increased, total remained static at about 16.5 million; rural non-farm increased about 1.5 million.

A result of migration; 15 percent of families on relief in several sections of southern cotton belt without male over 16. Another 15 percent without employable male.

Negroes are a smaller percentage of southern population now than a half century ago. Following table indicates what happened in Black Belt (where Negroes are a majority of population).

	<u>Total Population of Black Belt</u>	<u>Negroes</u>	<u>Percent Negroes</u>
1910	8,387,958	4,842,766	57.7
1920	8,968,132	4,806,565	53.6
1930	9,525,815	4,790,049	50.3

It is estimated that the natural increase of population in the Southeast by 1960 will be 10,000,000 people. But that if migration should resume and continue at the same rate as in period 1920-30, only 1,890,000 of these will remain in the South.

Total migration since 1900, 3,500,000 people, about 1,000,000 of them Negroes. Negro exodus chiefly since 1916 beginning of war-industrial demand for labor.

Migration stopped short with depression. In fact, about 1,250,000 returned to South after depression CHIEFLY to poorest land areas (whence they had migrated, of course, and where land was cheap).

Increase in Southeastern urban population 1900-30 175.9 percent
 " " " rural " " 17.1 percent

XII. What becomes of Southern College graduates?

The Facts:

About half the people listed in Who's Who in America who were born in the Southeast now live outside the region. Migration of eminent whites is therefore about 200 percent greater than migration of the general population.

About 63 percent of the Negro leaders listed in Who's Who in Colored America born in the Southeast now live outside of the region. Hence the proportion (200 percent greater) holds for both colored and white.

We exported about 45 percent of our eminent social scientists (Who's Who listed), and 60 percent of our eminent natural scientists.

We exported 70 percent of the medical men who are listed in American Men of Science, and 80 percent of the researchers in the natural and exact sciences listed and starred, same source.

XIII. Providing opportunity through industrialization of the South presents formidable hazards. The excess of population, low income level, and lack of education all pave the way for exploitation of labor by invading industry — a change in form rather than extent of the population's misfortunes.

The Facts:

Average per capita income for Southeastern farm people was about \$183 per annum in 1929.

For country as a whole average farm income was \$273 per capita per year, for California, \$818 per capita per year.

Income and wages in the South fall anywhere from 30 to 50 percent below the national level.

XIV. Approach to a solution must be along the line of increased efficiency in the use of the land. And obviously since by long usage and habit the raising of cotton has been exchanged and other modes of operation are little known, this program must be preceded by education on an extensive scale. The Farm Security Administration undertakes an adult education program in connection with its rehabilitation loan program.

The Facts:

The farmer who borrows receives the assistance of experts in farm and home management, not only in planning sounder farm practice but, through county supervisors, in carrying that farm plan into effect. It is the estimate of those working in the South that this education is a greater factor in the rehabilitation of clients than all other factors combined -- including the loan. Significantly, field workers in the Southeast lay more emphasis on the importance of education supervision than field workers in any other section of the country.

- XV. In its Tenant Purchase program, too, the educational aspect is emphasized.

The Facts:

The purchasing of farms is an experiment in the effects of ownership. But whether or not ownership will result in a significant increase in the incomes of tenant purchasers is yet to be seen -- and will depend to a great extent on the degree to which it encourages adoption of a sounder farm practice -- as we seek to have it do -- similar to that which is encouraged through the loan and education program of the rehabilitation division.

- XVI. In either case, a more stable and satisfactory life is sought along the line of a shift in emphasis from a gamble in the international cotton markets toward a diversified program, living comforts, a better diet, a healthy population, and a more self-reliant one. It is felt that this program promises a higher real income, a better way of life for Southeastern farmers. Salutary as this program may be in fostering better living, it will still leave some part of the problem of a larger cash income to be confronted by the nation. And for some things necessary to a decent standard of life, cash is necessary. The cash income the average farm in the Southeast will produce is, for instance, insufficient to pay for decent housing.

The Facts:

With what expedient this problem is to be met, it is too early yet to predict. The government has provided a subsidy for clearing of urban slums at the current session of Congress. Perhaps it is possible that some future session will extend a similar subsidy to the city slum's rural counterpart.

The value of the average tenant home in that area, capitalized at 6 percent, would amount to an annual rental of \$18 to \$25 a year. The median value of tenant homes in the area is about \$350.

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THE SECRETARY OF THE
TREASURY
WASHINGTON, D. C.
JANUARY 1, 1900

TO THE HONORABLE
COMMISSIONER OF THE
LAND OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D. C.

SIR:

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 28th inst.

and in reply to inform you that the same has been forwarded to the proper authorities for their consideration.